

BREAKING OF GROUND FOR AMPOL REFINERY

History Is Made at Lytton

History was made at Lytton on 9 August 1963 when the Premier of Queensland (Hon. G. F. R. Nicklin, M.L.A.) performed the ceremony of breaking the ground for the construction of the £21-million oil refinery to be built at Lytton by Ampol.

Mr. Nicklin drove a bulldozer to break the first earth for the official start of site preparation. As he pressed the starter button of the bulldozer it automatically exploded the dirt pile. Ground preparatory work on the refinery began ten days later after the completion of surveys by engineers. The State Government will develop a three miles stretch of river frontage from Fort Lytton to Gibson Island power station for petro-chemical industries.

Ampol's schedule calls for the refinery to be operating by mid-1965. Location of the refinery at Lytton has necessitated a channel improvement scheme which aims at deepening the approaches through Moreton Bay to the mouth of the Brisbane River to handle the super-tankers that will be using the berthing facilities.

The Premier, in a brief address, recalled that the old Fort at Lytton was built as a result of the Russian Scare of the 1880's.

It is a matter for great satisfaction to all who are anxious to preserve our historic landmarks that Ampol is leaving the Fort intact and the guns of the original batteries, including a big 64-pounder, have been furbished and repolished. In this connection the company has co-operated actively with the wishes of the Royal Historical Society.

Queensland's first Governor, Sir George Bowen, named the area Port Lytton, as it was first known, after the eminent author and statesman, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, who was Minister for the Colonies at the time.

In March 1860 Sir George wrote to the author of *The Last Days of Pompeii*: "The future port of Brisbane on Moreton Bay has already been called Lytton."

This prediction was never realised, and the muzzle-loading guns of Fort Lytton were not needed against the Russians. However, there was a time in Queensland's history, so the

story goes, when there was a threat of their use against the celebrated *Gayundah*, the flagship of the Colony's Navy, now doing duty as a breakwater at Redcliffe.

There is a legend that the peppery Captain Wright, R.N., who took the attitude that he was under the orders of the British admiral in Sydney, trained his guns on Parliament House which he threatened to shell. Wright had become involved in a dispute with the Queensland Government, whose employee he was. He had taken on coal and stores with the intention of steaming to Sydney to lay his case before the Admiral, but the Government got wind of the "plot" and instructed the garrison at Fort Lytton to shell the *Gayundah* if she attempted to pass the fort and put to sea.

However, Captain Wright was persuaded to submit to *force majeure* in the shape of P. W. Pinnock, Brisbane's chief magistrate at the time, and a squad of burly policemen with Martini-Henry rifles, who boarded the *Gayundah* where she lay at anchor in the Gardens Reach. He departed peaceably from his quarterdeck, escorted by the minions of the law. Captain Wright was given his salary dues and fare to England and indignantly departed from the Queensland scene.—Ed.